CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 28 August 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka)

GE.97-63923 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 776th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As agreed at our last plenary meeting, we shall hold an informal plenary meeting immediately following the adjournment of this plenary, in order to start the consideration of the draft annual report of the Conference to the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I have on my list of speakers for today the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Zahran of Egypt, the Special Coordinator on expansion of membership, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, the Special Coordinator on review of the agenda, Ambassador Náray of Hungary, the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, as well as the representatives of Germany and Iraq. I now give the floor to Ambassador Zahran of Egypt.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me at the outset to express to you my congratulations and those of the Egyptian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I wish to assure you of our eagerness to cooperate fully with you in the exercise of your duties. Your presidency of the Conference comes at the end of your assignment as Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in Geneva, thereby crowning your work and your valuable contributions not only to the Conference but to various other Geneva-based international institutions during this period, which has witnessed so many events. It is auspicious that you are assuming the presidency after the expansion of the membership of the Conference, in which you played an important role. I would like to express to you my most sincere congratulations and my best wishes to you and your family after your departure from Geneva.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassador Absa Claude Diallo of Senegal and Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for their valuable endeavours during their tenure of the presidency. I would like also to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues who have recently joined the CD to head their countries' delegations, namely, Ambassador Javier Illanes of Chile, Ambassador Clive Wallace Pearson of New Zealand and Ambassador Ian Soutar of the United Kingdom, and I look forward to cooperating with all of them in the future.

(continued in English)

Pursuant to the decision adopted by the Conference on Disarmament at its 770th plenary meeting, on 26 June 1997, by which it appointed me as a Special Coordinator for the improved and effective functioning of the CD, I have held four informal open-ended consultations in order to seek the views of the member States on the subject. The consultations were as transparent as possible and open to non-member States participating in the work of the Conference. In addition, I have undertaken informal consultations with the respective groups and China on the outline of the draft report which I have prepared.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

In fulfilling my mandate the consultations focused on issues of importance and concern to various delegations bearing in mind the ideas and views expressed by them. However, in submitting this report to the Conference on Disarmament, it is worth while noting that the delegation of Chile made a suggestion to update the CD's rules of procedure and, to that effect, it submitted a draft paper entitled "Proposed draft - Rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament", which the CD secretariat circulated as document CD/1473 in order to enable delegations to study it. Due to the limited time allowed to me to consult on the improved and effective functioning of the CD, I was not in a position to consult or to have a substantive exchange of views with member States on the Chilean proposal.

In order to proceed in a structured manner, I prepared a set of questions which were made available to all delegations. The informal open-ended consultations, which I organized with the valuable assistance of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, were constructive and generated a rich debate. Against this background, my own perception from the consultations leads me to believe that further consultations may be required. It is to be noted that the present report has not been negotiated with member States; thus it cannot be considered as a report of the CD. I can regroup the issues in question in two categories.

As far as the first category is concerned, a better understanding seems to be detected on the following. First, it was generally felt that, while the expansion of the CD is the responsibility of another Special Coordinator, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, the aim of the expansion of the CD is to ensure a more representative membership. Any further expansion may provide an opportunity to make a change or an adaptation to the method of work of the CD.

Second, the rule of consensus in decision-making should be maintained. In the framework of consensus-building, it was felt that flexibility and mutual accommodation should be demonstrated in order to attain that objective.

Third, the need to make full use of the mechanisms provided for in the rules of procedure regarding various forms of informal consultations was recognized. In this regard, resorting to informal open-ended consultations was particularly encouraged.

Fourth, while the group system was not envisaged in the rules of procedure, the current informal regional and political groups are maintained in order to facilitate consultations among the CD members. In addition, discussions favoured consultations among the so-called like-minded countries, depending on the issue under consideration, in order to facilitate reaching consensus.

Fifth, no change in the present rules regarding the adoption of the CD agenda and programme of work at the beginning of each session.

Sixth, it was felt that the President of the CD could, acting on a request by a member of the Conference and with the concurrence of the Conference, propose to move the closure of a debate on procedural matters. It

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

was also recognized that it is within the prerogative of the President to establish a time limit for statements or interventions of delegations after consultation with the CD members and their consent.

Seventh, no change should be made in the current four-working-week tenure for each member country to preside over the Conference as provided for in the rules of procedure.

Eighth, the secretariat of the Conference should continue to provide the necessary professional assistance and support to the President of the Conference in the performance of his or her duties, including providing background material and information, and ensuring continuity of the functions of the presidency, since it rotates every four working weeks.

Ninth, the rules of procedure regarding the role of the secretariat and the work of the Conference on Disarmament should remain without change. In this regard, reference was made particularly to rules 15 and 17; the latter underlines the necessary support which the United Nations Secretary-General is invited to provide to the CD secretariat.

Tenth, concerning the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding the reform of the United Nations, particularly the disarmament section, the CD could have been consulted before issuing this section of the report for the sake of accuracy and comprehensiveness.

Eleventh, the interaction between the CD and the General Assembly should be maintained as far as the CD annual reports and the United Nations General Assembly resolutions are concerned.

Twelfth, the contribution of NGOs to the work of the CD was recognized. While their participation in the CD negotiations was ruled out, their continued interaction with delegations was encouraged.

As for the second category of issues, further consultations are needed on the following. First, application of the rule of consensus to matters of substance only, or both substance and procedure. In this regard, delegations found difficulty in reaching a common understanding on the definition of consensus, as well as the distinction between matters of substance and procedure.

Second, adoption of the agenda and programme of work of the Conference on a biennial or pluri-annual basis.

Third, inclusion in the annual reports of the CD of a brief description of the main themes, initiatives and proposals made through statements at the plenary meetings of the Conference without value judgement. In this regard, it was emphasized that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the annual reports should be factual and reflect the negotiations and work of the Conference. Some delegations thought that such a brief description of proposals and initiatives in the body of the report is needed for a better reading and better consideration by the United Nations General Assembly session.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

Fourth, greater involvement of NGOs in the work of the Conference, such as allowing them to deliver statements at plenary meetings, if requested. A delegation proposed that the Presidential "troika" might be authorized to organize an exchange of views with NGOs and report to the CD.

Against this background, my personal assessment is that the informal open-ended consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the CD were useful, constructive and reflected the shared desire to continue in the future the consultations to improve the effectiveness of the functioning of the CD. Hence, I recommend that the Conference on Disarmament continue consultations to re-examine the efficiency of its work in its next session in 1998 in the same format, and to benefit from the rich debate which took place during this part of the current CD session.

Mr. KREID (Austria): Let me at the outset congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your mandate and wish you well in your ongoing efforts of providing guidance and inspiration to the work of the Conference. I should also like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská of Slovakia, under whose skilful leadership I was appointed Special Coordinator on expansion. I have the honour and pleasure to acquaint you with my findings.

On the basis of the mandate bestowed upon me by member States to examine the question of expansion, I have proceeded with consultations both bilaterally and multilaterally. Regrettably, the limited time available to me during the current session of the CD has not allowed bilateral contacts with all member delegations. Yet, in the course of meetings with the groups and of open-ended informal consultations conducted on Tuesday 19 August, I had the opportunity to collect the views of a large number of delegations, members as well as non-member participants.

Because of the brevity of time and the divergence of views expressed, I do not feel that the moment has come for me to formulate a concrete proposal for the admission of new members on which the Conference could take a decision. Rather, it appears necessary that further efforts be made with a view to narrowing down existing differences of opinion and thus laying the basis for a consensus decision.

My findings so far can be resumed in the following way. While there is no delegation opposed to expansion in principle, there are divergent views as to its appropriate timing and scope and possible selection criteria for new members. It has been stated that, at a time of prolonged dispute within the Conference on its programme of work and in the absence of substantial negotiations, the admission of new members would hardly be the proper signal. Having admitted 23 countries only last year, which equals roughly a third of its current composition, the Conference now needs to demonstrate that this sizeable increase in membership has not affected its capacity as a negotiating forum. This amounts to saying that a decision on expansion cannot be taken until there is sufficient experience to evaluate the performance of a 61-member CD. If this attitude prevails it would, of course, significantly delay action on further CD expansion.

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

A concept which is favoured by a number of delegations is that of fixing an upper limit of membership. It was said that there is a need to define an optimum number for the conduct of negotiations. While some delegations feel that this optimum number has already been exceeded in the course of the last expansion, the others believe that there is still room for new members. However, no delegation has specified where actually the limit should be set or how such an optimum number could be arrived at.

In this context a recurrent complaint against the lack of participation of certain member countries was formulated. It is widely felt that efforts should be made in order to find out if all member countries wish to retain their seat in the Conference. It should be noted, however, that Ambassador O'Sullivan had already taken such an initiative with negative results. As to the future membership, a number of delegations stated that the will and capacity to contribute to the work of the Conference should constitute a selection criterion.

On the other hand, a considerable number of delegations felt that the CD needed to be an open-ended body and should admit each country interested in membership in order to better reflect the trends and positions prevailing in the global context and to enhance its representativeness. These delegations pleading for an open-ended CD argued that the number of participants was not decisive for the success of a negotiation, and that the current international environment no longer justified the traditional concepts of regional or any other kind of balance. Thinking in terms of balance, it was argued, was particularly unproductive in an organization which took decisions by consensus. In this context reference was made repeatedly to General Assembly resolution 51/47 A, which calls upon the Conference on Disarmament "to consider all remaining applications for membership with a view to reaching a decision on its further enlargement before the end of its 1997 session".

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned arguments, the issue of balance was frequently raised. I have therefore come to believe that the question of balance will need to receive proper attention in formulating any final recommendations to the Conference.

Apart from the demand for regional or political balance, it was argued that the Conference should admit new members in chronological order based on the date of their application for membership. One delegation suggested an approach whereby the President of the Conference submits the question of admission of each applicant country to the Conference in chronological order. Other delegations were in favour of a phased approach in a time-bound framework whereby the Conference would decide on the future date of admission of all applicant countries spread out over a number of years.

While such concepts deserve further study, it should be pointed out that neither approach would respond to the criterion of regional balance, and that the last-mentioned option of a phased admission might be found incompatible with the rule of a regular review of membership which points to a step-by-step procedure. It also leaves unanswered what should happen to future applicants who do not figure in the agreed schedule of admission.

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

The opinion was voiced by certain delegations that future members should be chosen on the basis of their "peace-lovingness". It might be recalled that Ambassador O'Sullivan, when drawing up his list of 23 countries for admission, was, inter alia, guided by the concept of bringing countries in regions of conflict into the CD precisely in order to implicate them more fully in disarmament affairs.

Taking into consideration these results of my consultations, which I have tried to summarize as objectively as possible, it seems obvious that at this stage a decision on the question of expansion appears premature. Further work is necessary to clarify a number of concepts such as that of an optimum number of members, of the connection between effective negotiations and the number of participants, or of specific selection criteria for new members.

Most, if not all, of these considerations were already discussed at earlier stages of CD expansion. The fact that they were not developed further at that time does not invalidate them for the future, although it points to the inherent difficulty of translating such concepts into practical action.

There is a keen awareness among member States that the profound transformation of the global political scene cannot be ignored by the Conference and that it needs to be reflected both with regard to membership and working methods. Yet delegations are under no illusion as to the difficulty and maybe inescapable contradictions in trying to grapple with the opposing concepts of representativeness and effectiveness, of national security interests reflected in the application for membership and the perceived need for regional and political balance as one of the key ingredients of past expansions.

If the question of membership is regarded as one subordinated to the question of functioning of the Conference, the answer to the scope and character of the next expansion will have to be given in the light of the findings of the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. The other option, to be sure, would be that the Conference first decides on its membership and then embarks on an examination of whether it needs to adjust its working methods accordingly.

The argument that a modest increase in membership will not have a significant impact on the work of the CD deserves proper attention as well. In such a case it might be possible to reach agreement on an expansion of membership up to a number considered tolerable for the process of decision-making in the CD. To find out what this "tolerable increase" might be could well be one of the tasks of the next Special Coordinator on expansion, should the Conference decide on such an appointment.

In conclusion, I should like to express my appreciation to all delegations which have participated in my consultations and helped me to obtain as clear a picture as possible of the prevailing trains of thought on the issue of expansion. I should also like to render tribute to the secretariat, which has indeed provided valuable assistance to me in the execution of my task.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I am confident that you will provide us with strong leadership through the difficult closing weeks of the annual session. Please rest assured of my delegation's support. May I also express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnahorská of Slovakia, for the excellent manner in which she performed her duties at the helm of this body?

I have asked for the floor in my capacity as Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda. Following my appointment at the 770th plenary meeting on 26 June this year, I conducted bilateral consultations with almost 30 delegations representing all constituencies. I should like to emphasize that they have been far from exhaustive due to the lack of time. I apologize to those delegations, among them observer delegations, whom I could not reach this way. I had the honour to undertake collective consultations with the members of the G-21, as well as with delegations belonging to the Western Group. An exchange of views on the agenda also took place in the Eastern European Group. I also consulted with the delegation of China. I convened an open-ended consultation on 19 August this year, when members and observers had the opportunity to reflect on my preliminary report. I am grateful to Ambassadors and delegates who have made themselves available for these talks and the openness they have demonstrated. National positions have also found their reflection in the statements to the plenary meetings, which I have duly taken into account.

I wish to state that I did not have to start my work from scratch. In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the comprehensive and thoughtful report of Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria, my predecessor last year, which was submitted on 3 September 1996. The validity of most of his findings and conclusions have been confirmed by my consultations.

I wish to add, however, that the mandate of the Special Coordinator for 1996 was a more specific one as opposed to the rather general and less precise mandate I have received. My consultations inevitably touched upon the problem of the programme of work as well. This was partly due to the interrelated character of rules 27 and 28 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, but most importantly the different interpretation of the terms "agenda" and "programme of work" by delegations, as I will indicate in my report later. I believe, therefore, that a future discussion on the review of the agenda should be conducted in conjunction with the work programme, as was the case last year. I have no doubt that a successful review of the CD's agenda would make an important contribution to the much needed revitalization of our work.

Against this background, allow me to share with you some of the impressions I have gained from these consultations. Before doing that, let me stress that any observations or conclusions my report contains are my own and are not binding for delegations.

The observations of my report are grouped around two main schools of thought related to the agenda, though they do not cover completely all shades of opinion. This structure is not an artificial invention - rather, a natural outcome of what I have heard from you.

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

Delegations associating themselves with the first school of thought, my consultations revealed, advocate a strong relationship between the Final Document of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament, held in 1978, the Decalogue, and the actual agenda of the CD. These delegations pointed out that they did not see the roots of the problems in the content of the present agenda, or in the accepted priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament, which they still consider relevant, but rather in their implementation. As they stressed, the CD has failed to address the agenda items which are related to nuclear disarmament. These delegations pointed out that nuclear disarmament should remain the absolute priority on any future agenda of the CD. Delegations representing this position expressed to me their wish to maintain the present agenda in its entirety. In their view any major changes in the present agenda can be introduced only by a new special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament. Under this concept the proper place for the selection of topics for actual negotiations is the programme of work.

The other current of opinion on this question enjoys equally wide support. In the view of these delegations, the agenda should be brought in line with the profound changes which have occurred in the world in the last couple of years. They believe that the present agenda is anachronistic and should be replaced by a new, updated, streamlined, forward-looking and realistic one. Delegations sharing this approach are of the opinion that the CD, as an autonomous independent body, is free to set new priorities and draw up a new agenda. The second basic element for this school of thinking, as formulated during the talks, is the need for a more practical agenda, focusing on items with a real potential for substantive or preparatory negotiations. The programme of work for these delegations should consist of a calendar of meetings and eventual institutional arrangements. The third and last element envisaged by the proponents of this approach is the notion of balance between nuclear and conventional items. Accordingly, they prefer the establishment of three broad items entitled "Nuclear disarmament", "Conventional disarmament" and "Other items", this last one mainly to deal with issues related to outer space. In this context, many delegations expressed support for document CD/1434. Delegations belonging to this school of thought indicated that their priority was to start negotiations in the CD on FMCT and APLs.

Some delegations with a clear preference for the first approach indicated a certain degree of flexibility, saying that they were ready to accept a kind of restructuring of the agenda if it were instrumental in overcoming the present stalemate on condition that the existing pattern of priorities favouring nuclear disarmament is maintained.

One delegation suggested the introduction of a two-tier agenda. This would amount to an entirely new structure where the agenda is split up into items reflecting the long-term disarmament priorities of the international community and items for concrete negotiations in a given year.

This concludes the review of the general considerations and proposals delegations put forward during the bilateral or multilateral consultations.

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

Let me turn now to comments made concerning the concrete items of the agenda adopted on 14 February 1997 and contained in document CD/1446. The agenda items have remained unchanged for several years. The only change as compared with the agenda in 1996 is the deletion of item 1, "Nuclear test ban". I would not venture to provide you with exact statistics on the number of delegations favouring or opposing keeping, deleting, adding or reformulating a given item on the agenda. I trust, however, that the exchanges of views indicated some general trends in the attitude of delegations.

The comments and observations received on the concrete items on the agenda as adopted for this year are as follows:

Item 1. Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament

This was the most discussed item during my consultations. A great number of delegations conveyed to me the view that it constitutes an absolute priority for them and it is the central issue the CD must address. This stance was reflected in many statements in the plenary and in formal proposals tabled this year, for example in documents CD/1462 and CD/1463, just to mention the most recent ones.

There is a clear trend to keep this item. Many delegations, however, referring to the fundamental political changes that have taken place in the last several years, clarified their positions by proposing amendments to the actual wording. The idea was advanced to delete the first part of item 1, which would then read "Nuclear disarmament". Some proposed to reformulate this item as "Non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament". These suggestions were made with a view to better reflecting existing realities and the progress made in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

One delegation proposed to split up this item into two. At least two delegations favour its merger with item 2.

Item 2. Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters

My previous consultations revealed a clear trend in favour of either the deletion of this item or its merger with item 1. On the other hand, several delegations indicated to me that they attach importance to this issue being reflected in the agenda.

Item 3. Prevention of an arms race in outer space

There is a clear trend in favour of keeping this item. At the same time delegations' positions differed in regard to the urgency of the problem. At least two delegations put forward the idea of reformulating this item so it would read as follows: "Legally binding document to prevent the weaponization of outer space". Some consider that the most appropriate way to address this issue would be in the context of confidence-building measures.

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

Item 4. Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons

There is clear general support for keeping this item, be it as a lone-standing item or under the broader group of items entitled "Nuclear disarmament". One delegation conveyed to me its doubts whether this issue was more efficiently dealt with in the CD or in the context of the NPT. One delegation proposed the notion of "positive security assurances" to be included in the agenda.

Item 5. New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons

Delegations are divided over this issue. Several delegations favour its maintenance; some others called it too vague and therefore proposed its deletion.

Item 6. Comprehensive programme of disarmament

A great number of delegations from all groups suggested the deletion of this item or at least indicated the lack of opposition on their side to do so if there is a consensus. Others called for its retention and its expansion to cover nuclear as well as conventional weapons. Proposals were made to replace it by a new item entitled either "Conventional disarmament" or "Anti-personnel landmines".

Item 7. Transparency in armaments

For many delegations this item is high on the list of priorities and most delegations do not oppose keeping this item. They stressed the need for a comprehensive scope, including weapons of mass destruction. I have, however, also registered views calling for its deletion on the grounds that it was outdated.

I would like to conclude this section of my report by listing specific proposals which have been supported to be added to the existing agenda. Some of them, like "FMCT", "conventional disarmament" and "anti-personnel landmines", have been recurrent issues in the CD's deliberations this year. My consultations did not reveal new developments in the well-known trends. Another group of proposed additions, mentioned by at least one delegation, comprises the following items: regional aspects of disarmament, and miliary restructuring and conversion. This last was proposed by one delegation with specific reference to the requirements of the post-cold-war era.

This very general outline of the impressions I gained from talks with you indicates that consensus on the future agenda is not within reach. Also due to the complexity of the questions involved and the limited time span of my tenure, I am not in a position to make any recommendations on the substance of the review of the agenda to the Conference. On the other hand, I had the impression that delegations are interested and willing to take up this issue

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

in 1998. May I therefore recommend to the Conference to continue the consultations on the review of the agenda during the next annual session?

In conclusion I would like to thank all delegations for their support and cooperation and their active contribution. I also thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the CD, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and his staff for their professionalism and assistance.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation as you carry out your demanding responsibilities. I also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for the effective and productive way in which she guided our deliberations. I also welcome the newcomers to our Conference.

I have asked for the floor to present a further report to the CD on the consultations I have undertaken as the Conference's Special Coordinator on landmines.

I have now held bilateral consultations with over 55 members of the Conference seeking their views on a possible mandate for the CD to undertake work on landmines and their views on when that work might commence.

My consultations thus far have confirmed that a clear majority of delegation members of the Conference are in favour, or are at least not opposed to, appropriate work commencing in the CD on landmines. While serious caution was expressed by some delegations, the mandate with the most supporters in the Conference is one which would have the CD adopt a phased or step-by-step approach to the elimination of landmines beginning with work on exports, imports and transfers. Most delegations would prefer to decide on a specific mandate in early 1998.

That said, there are at least two delegations who have indicated that they need further instructions before committing themselves to any particular course of action. There are two delegations that remain opposed to work in the CD, and there are delegations who would prefer a different mandate to the one I have just described.

As Special Coordinator I have interpreted my role as to take soundings of delegations' positions, to identify both the common ground and those issues on which opinions differ, and then to attempt to come up with a proposal which is likely to have the most chance of being adopted by the Conference.

I am at the stage of completing my soundings of delegations and identifying where they come together and where they divide. One overriding point in common is that a role for the CD cannot be precisely determined until early 1998.

With my mandate about to expire I find myself in the same position as my fellow Coordinators, that is, needing more time to complete the task this

(Mr. Campbell, Australia)

Conference entrusted to me. I therefore seek the approval of the Conference to the extension of my mandate to enable me to present a report in the first part of our 1998 session.

The purpose of that extension would be to complete my initial round of bilateral meetings, undertake consultations, including open-ended consultations as appropriate, and meet with regional groups during the inter-sessional period with a view to presenting a full and final report to the CD during the first part of our session in 1998.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of this Conference. We appreciate that you are discharging your duties at a difficult juncture and in anticipation of the normal alphabetical order, thus demonstrating a strong commitment to the purposes of the Conference on Disarmament. May I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation? Allow me also to express my gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská, for her untiring effort to lead our work. At the same time I would like to welcome our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of Chile, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The fundamental changes which have occurred in international security following the end of the cold war have made possible outstanding success in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

In September 1992 the Conference on Disarmament reported the Chemical Weapons Convention to the United Nations General Assembly. On 29 April 1997 this Convention, which provides for an effectively verifiable ban of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, entered into force.

Last year this Conference successfully concluded negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty - a long sought-after goal in the history of arms control.

Both achievements have demonstrated the CD's capacity to succeed in complex negotiations. While the post-cold-war era offers unique opportunities for strengthening international security and stability in an environment of globalization, cooperation and growing interdependence of States, we still face a number of risks. It is a world fraught with regional conflicts, convulsive nationalism, ethnic strife and terrorism. Huge conventional arsenals and considerable stocks of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery entail a persistent risk of proliferation. Thus, the disarmament process has not yet come to an end - it is facing new daunting challenges.

In nuclear disarmament important progress has been achieved, but much remains to be done. Germany welcomes the agreement reached by President Clinton and President Yeltsin during their March 1997 Helsinki summit. We also welcome the agreement reached between the United States of America and Russia concerning the demarcation between tactical and strategic missile defence. We hope that this agreement will facilitate early ratification of START II by the Russian Duma so that START III negotiations

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

can begin without delay, aiming at reductions in deployed strategic warheads to 2,000 to 2,500 by 31 December 2007. This would bring strategic nuclear arsenals down to 20 per cent of the highest cold war levels and would be a major step towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Attempting to interfere with the bilateral nuclear disarmament process, which is well under way, would not yield any benefits for the CD; nor would it be productive to set specific time limits for the process of nuclear disarmament.

We do believe, however, that nuclear disarmament is an important issue which the CD must be able to address with a view to encouraging progress and to identifying issues that could be the subject of multilateral negotiations.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the constraints it imposes on the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons is an example of the substantial contribution the CD can make to the wider process of nuclear disarmament. The next logical step overdue is the negotiation and successful conclusion by the CD of a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Both resolution 48/75 L, adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly, and the decision by the 1995 NPT Review Conference on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" called for early cut-off negotiations. Germany remains committed to the prompt commencement of negotiations on an FMCT which should end for ever the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and make a significant contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament as well as to the strengthening of nuclear non-proliferation. Such a treaty should be effectively verifiable, non-discriminatory and universally applicable. Full-scope safeguards under international supervision should apply to nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike.

After intensive consultations by Ambassador Shannon, the CD reached consensus in 1995 on a mandate for cut-off negotiations. It is flexible enough to permit addressing the security concerns expressed by the members of this Conference and thus provides a solid basis for negotiations.

This brings me to another urgent issue which is high on the international agenda both as a humanitarian concern and as a disarmament measure - a ban on anti-personnel landmines (APLs). Germany is deeply concerned by the human suffering caused by the proliferation of APLs. We vigorously support international efforts to combat and resolve the landmine problem. In 1996 Germany completely renounced APLs and imposed an unlimited export moratorium on such weapons. By the end of 1997 all German APL stocks will have been destroyed.

In summer 1996 Federal Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel launched a seven-point action programme on APLs which was welcomed by more than 100 States. Germany is also committed to the EU Joint Action on APLs of October 1996, which aims at a total ban on APLs at the earliest possible date, a comprehensive export moratorium on all types of APLs and increased financial support for international mine-clearing activities.

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

Now the time has come for negotiations to implement United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S adopted by an overwhelming majority of 156 States. Germany is fully committed to the Ottawa Process including its landmarks, the Brussels Declaration and the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which will hopefully lead to the signing of a convention totally banning the production, stockpiling, use and trading of APLs before the end of this year.

At the same time, Germany is convinced that the CD, with its long-standing experience and know-how as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum, can and should make a major contribution to solving the APLs problem.

From the very outset we have held the view that the Ottawa Process and work within the CD should be complementary, that is, mutually consistent and reinforcing. Both tracks should be directed towards the paramount goal of a comprehensive and effective ban on APLs. In this context we see a significant role for the CD in making a substantial contribution towards ensuring the universality of an APL ban.

While we are aware that the CD may not be in a position to reach this objective in a single negotiating effort, it has the capacity to achieve results with universal effect.

We welcome and support Ambassador Campbell's discharging of his duties as Special Coordinator on APLs. We hope that after the signature of a convention on APLs in Ottawa, which is scheduled to take place before the end of this year, the stage can be set for the CD to establish an ad hoc group and to adopt a negotiating mandate on APLs at the very outset of next year's session.

The CD cannot produce a spectacular success such as last year's CTBT every year. Sometimes a period of reflection may be needed. But as this year's session is drawing to an end, we cannot be but disappointed by its results. Too much time is being expended with too little result. Despite its numerous formal and informal meetings, the Conference is not being perceived by our publics as the productive multilateral forum it should be. As a consequence, the CD is facing an increasing credibility problem. Against this background, we welcome the appointment of four Special Coordinators and fully support their work. We attach particular importance to improving the functioning of this Conference, including the updating of its agenda.

We do see a continuing need to examine how we can make our working methods more effective. In particular, given the monthly rotating Chair, we think there is an objective need to strengthen the role and function of the CD presidency. Certain concrete steps to this end would make it easier for the CD President to carry out his tasks and would, at the same time, lie in the interest of all of us. More effective working methods are necessary now, and even more so when the CD envisages further expansion of its membership.

We also believe that an update of our traditional CD agenda has to reflect the international changes and resulting challenges. We therefore think that the time is ripe for negotiations on an FMCT and a ban on APLs.

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

Consultations so far have, however shown that we will probably not be able to reach consensus by the end of this session on any of the subjects under review. Special Coordinators should therefore be permitted to pursue their work during the inter-sessional period with a view to presenting their reports at the beginning of next year's session.

Mr. President, my delegation places full trust in your leadership and determination to move this Conference forward. Its credibility will largely depend on whether it can rise to the challenge of engaging in substantive negotiations on a ban on the production of fissile material and on anti-personnel landmines. The Conference has proven in the past that it can meet such challenges and resolve problems if there is political will. We have full confidence that you and the succeeding Swedish presidency will spare no effort to prepare the ground - also during the inter-sessional period - so that substantive negotiations can begin at the outset of next year's session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq, Ambassador Al-Tikriti.

Mr. AL-TIKRITI (Iraq) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at such a crucial stage of its history. We are confident that your competence, wisdom and experience will help to overcome the difficulties impeding our work. I would like to commend your predecessor, Her Excellency the distinguished Ambassador of Slovakia, who discharged her responsibilities in a convincing and objective manner, and I would also like to welcome our colleagues, the new Ambassadors, who have assumed their duties at the Conference. I wish to assure them that my country's delegation will cooperate with them in a highly diligent and responsible manner.

Mr. President, my country's delegation listened with great attention to your opening statement at the plenary meeting on 21 August 1997, in which you described in an honest and realistic manner the uncomfortable situation that has prevailed during this year's session. However, your optimistic expectations for the coming session have created the hope of surmounting the difficulties which are impeding the accomplishment of further achievements in this forum in order to make changes and contemplate open-mindedly what has to be done in this Conference, which enjoys the trust and confidence of the international community in matters of disarmament.

Needless to say, important and sensitive issues require time for thorough deliberation, an exchange of views and consultation in order to take appropriate, practical and realistic decisions on the important issues facing the Conference. Nevertheless, this should not be used by some parties as a means to sidetrack issues of great importance to the majority and weaken efforts exerted to reach solutions to the outstanding questions which the Conference has failed to resolve at its 1997 session. In this respect, a well-known saying could apply: "If you leave food too long on the fire, you will certainly burn it". Therefore we urge the Conference to be aware of the time element, which might not be in our favour.

(Mr. Al-Tikriti, Iraq)

Unfortunately, there appears to be a widespread feeling that some parties in the Conference are trying to block any progress in its work and keep it bogged down in prolonged debates, which sometimes seem to be sterile and pointless. While we appreciate the preoccupations and concerns of others, in our present-day world there are several priorities that cannot be disregarded or overlooked, because they represent a common goal for the whole of mankind, namely the total and final elimination of the nuclear threat. The experience of this year's session constitutes a discouraging and disappointing precedent. The session will end in two weeks' time, and the Conference has failed to resolve even the procedural matters and has not yet begun to discuss any of the substantive issues. There is no indication of flexibility on the questions of high priority which we have already mentioned.

Too much time has been spent on unproductive debates concerning issues on the Conference's agenda, and the positions of member States have become obvious both individually and within geographical and political groups. I would like to ask you: hasn't the time come to take the appropriate decision to begin our work seriously in order to make up for what we have already lost and accomplish at least part of what is expected of us?

My country's delegation, by raising this question at this very time two weeks before the end of this year's session, is inviting the Conference to make use of the inter-sessional period to endeavour to prepare the way for the commencement of substantive work at the beginning of 1998.

The central question facing the Conference is not whether there are further tasks to be fulfilled to ensure more stable and sustainable security for mankind; it is rather the identification of the issues to be negotiated with a view to achieving or approaching this goal, and the manner in which the negotiating process should be organized in order to enable us to achieve appropriate and realistic objectives that take into consideration the interests and concerns of all in an unbiased and democratic way. This Conference will remain the principal forum for negotiations aiming at concluding international agreements on disarmament issues, first and foremost among which is nuclear disarmament, which should remain at the top of the Conference's agenda. Hence, the nuclear-weapon States should shoulder their responsibilities in this respect since they have a special obligation under the provisions of the NPT and the document on principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT.

We noted a glimmer of hope in the statements made by some delegations at the last plenary meeting, and we could develop and build on this hope. Although some delegations wish to rephrase or delete parts of the agenda items for serious consultation without prejudice to the purely substantive issues, nuclear disarmament remains a priority for my country's delegation as well as for the Group of 21, of which Iraq is a member. This item represents a priority for us because of its importance to the international community as a whole. We believe that the priority for this Conference is total nuclear disarmament, as was made clear by my country's delegation in its statement in the plenary meeting on 14 August 1997. This is a wide-ranging and delicate issue which should be dealt with in a realistic manner. We therefore support the view that parallel steps should be taken to achieve the ultimate goal,

(Mr. Al-Tikriti, Iraq)

namely the elimination of nuclear weapons, by, for example, re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Realizing the sensitivity of nuclear disarmament and pending the achievement of this goal, we would like to reiterate the need to provide the non-nuclear-weapon States with assurances that nuclear weapons will not be used against them and that they will not be threatened with the use of such weapons. We therefore urge the Conference to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on assurances at its coming session, as well as the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, and my country's delegation is flexible with regard to the rephrasing of the title of this item.

My country's delegation listened a short while ago to the reports of the four Special Coordinators, and we would like to express to them our gratitude and appreciation for their constructive work and the considerable efforts and extensive consultations they have undertaken in a very transparent manner. My country's delegation has expressed its position with regard to the various issues under discussion. The rules of procedure state that the mandate of the Coordinators should be terminated after the presentation of their final reports. We therefore propose that it might be preferable to renew the mandates of the four distinguished Coordinators at the beginning of the next session in 1998 in order to enable them to continue their constructive work and not to waste more time next year. I believe that some of the Coordinators have put forward this idea in one way or another.

Finally, before concluding its statement, my country's delegation wishes to reaffirm its readiness to cooperate and coordinate both within the Group of 21 and with the Conference as a whole.

The PRESIDENT I thank the representative of Iraq for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile): With your permission, Sir, I will read a statement which has been submitted to the CD on behalf of Poland and Chile concerning the subject of anti-personnel landmines and the Conference on Disarmament. It says:

> "We express our recognition and support to the objectives of humanitarian nature pursued by the 'Ottawa Process' which encompasses the concern of the international community for eliminating anti-personnel landmines, thus reducing the great number of innocent people who fall every year a victim of this type of weapons.
>
> "We think that the convention which, as an outcome of this process, will be adopted by the Oslo Conference, would contribute to the achievement of this noble objective.
>
> "At the same time we are convinced that the subject of anti-personnel landmines includes important aspects which can best be addressed by the specialized negotiating forum of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Illanes, Chile)

"We believe that the Conference on Disarmament, through the consideration and negotiation of agreements complementary to, consistent with and mutually supportive of the one to be concluded in Ottawa, can make a significant contribution to reaching the goals of the United Nations on this matter.

"We agree that achieving universal support for such a goal should be a paramount objective, the attainment of which is possible through a negotiating process in which due consideration can be given to national security concerns of involved parties.

"It was with this in mind that we made a proposal to the Conference, on 27 March 1997, that led to the appointment of a Special Coordinator to hold consultations on a possible mandate for negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on the question of anti-personnel landmines. We commend him for his diligent work so far. Given the short period which he has had available for his consultations, and the need to take account of work proceeding on this issue outside the Conference on Disarmament, it is clear that he will not be in a position to present his final recommendations to the Conference before the end of this year's session. We would, therefore, strongly support the continuation of his consultations during the inter-sessional period and the presentation of a final report at the start of the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament."

This ends the statement, and allow me to add one word to say that this specific reference I have made to the report of the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Campbell, does not in any manner imply that we do not attach the same importance to the very valuable reports of the other Coordinators, the distinguished Ambassadors of Egypt, Austria and Hungary. Indeed, they all deserve the sincere appreciation and careful consideration of the CD. They are the fruit of intensive and intelligent labour, and they cast valuable light on complex issues which, as they have all explained today, would need further consultation and study.

Mr. DUARTE (Brazil): Mr. President, first of all, I wish to congratulate you on behalf of the Brazilian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. You can count on our full cooperation in the discharge of your duties. Let me also thank your predecessor, Ambassador Mária Krasnohorská, for her able conduct of CD business during her tenure. I wish also to thank the Special Coordinators for they comprehensive reports.

Allow me to refer specifically to the report of the Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning, Ambassador Zahran of Egypt. We see great value in his report, which covers extensively and in detail the various and delicate subjects considered during several rounds of informal consultations we held this session. We recognize the limitations of the assessments contained therein, both in terms of them binding only him as Special Coordinator and of the recommendation that the CD continue consultations on improved and effective functioning next session. However, I need to make a clarification with regard to one point. Given the views

(Mr. Duarte, Brazil)

expressed by my delegation on the specific question of non-governmental organizations' participation in CD work and the statement contained in paragraph 12 of the first heading of his report, in which it is stated that NGO participation in CD negotiations was ruled out, I should make it clear that this position does not correspond to the point of view of my delegation. The inclusion of this phrase in the report, unqualified as it is and under a heading whereby a better understanding seems to be detected on certain issues, should not be misconstrued as representing our opinion on this specific question. Conversely, we do look forward to further consultations on greater involvement of NGOs in the work of the Conference, as referred to in paragraph 4 of the second heading of his report.

Ms. VUORENPÄÄ (Finland): First I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the assumption of your demanding task and assure you of the full cooperation and support of the delegation of Finland.

Finland would like to thank the four Special Coordinators for their comprehensive reports. We consider it important that they can continue their work. In this context I would like to make a special reference to the report of Ambassador Campbell. As in the statement of the Ambassador of Chile, Finland would like to commend Ambassador Campbell for his diligent work so far. It is important that he continue his intensive consultations in the inter-sessional period. It is equally important that the members of the CD support him in his work. We also propose that the CD, in its report to the General Assembly, clearly indicate its wish to continue dealing expeditiously with the issue of APLs right from the beginning of its next session in January 1998.

Mr. ULUÇEVIK (Turkey): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor under your able presidency, I would like to congratulate you upon your assumption of this high office. I assure you of my delegation's full and constructive support and cooperation. I wish also to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská of Slovakia, for her outstanding performance as President. Moreover, it gives me pleasure to welcome in our midst Ambassador Javier Illanes of Chile, Ambassador Clive Pearson of New Zealand and Ambassador Ian Soutar of the United Kingdom.

As we have stated on behalf of the Turkish Government, for the record, on a number of previous occasions, my Government sees the CD as the most appropriate body to deal with the subject of APLs. Therefore, my delegation associates itself with the statement which has just been made by the distinguished Ambassador of Chile, particularly with its first subparagraph of paragraph 3, which reads as follows:

> "At the same time, we are convinced that the subject of anti-personnel landmines includes important aspects which can be best addressed by the specialized negotiating forum of the Conference on Disarmament."

We also share the view expressed in the said statement to the effect that in a negotiating process on APLs, due consideration should be given to the national security concerns of involved parties.

(Mr. Ulçevik, Turkey)

I should also like to take this opportunity to commend and thank Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Kreid of Austria, Special Coordinator on the expansion of membership, Ambassador Náray of Hungary, Special Coordinator on the agenda, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, for their respective comprehensive reports.

As to the report of Ambassador Campbell of Australia on the APLs, my delegation will favourably consider his recommendations. We are of the opinion that in order to enable the Conference to make a smooth start to its work next year, inter-sessional work needs to be done by the Special Coordinator on APLs. With this in mind, and also judging from the statements and recommendations of all four distinguished Special Coordinators, we believe that there is a need for them to continue their respective work and consultations in 1998. Therefore, my delegation favourably considers the idea of extending the mandates of all Special Coordinators.

Mr. ISTRATE (Romania): Mr. President, it is a particular pleasure for me to congratulate you, on behalf of the Romanian delegation, on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success in the fulfilment of your mandate, as we approach the final stage of our work this session, with the preparation of the report to the United Nations General Assembly already under way.

I have asked for the floor today in order to express the Romanian Government's support for the statement just delivered on behalf of Chile and Poland.

Romania is deeply concerned about the worsening of the humanitarian crisis provoked by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. We are therefore committed to contributing to the efforts aimed at coping with the global scourge of anti-personnel landmines towards the eventual elimination of these horrendous weapons. As an expression of that policy, my country voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, entitled "An international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines". In practical terms, Romania has observed, since 1995, a unilateral export moratorium on APLs, a measure which the Government intends to extend for a new three-year period. Apart from that, we expressed readiness to continue contributing to ongoing demining activities, as well as in terms of medical assistance to APL victims.

My country follows with interest the search for a solution to the sufferings and damage caused by landmines, undertaken by various international initiatives, in particular the "Ottawa Process". Along with the co-sponsors of today's statement on APLs, we hope that the convention which is to be concluded in December in that framework will represent a significant step forward on the road towards eliminating landmines for ever.

It is our considered view that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament of the international community, cannot stay outside the ever-growing trend of action against landmines. Participation in these efforts has increasingly become a question

(Mr. Istrate, Romania)

of credibility and relevance for our Conference. The Conference on Disarmament is a forum with large representation and valuable expertise. Acting complementarily with the "Ottawa Process", it could bring an invaluable contribution to the universal acceptance of a ban on APLs.

From this perspective, my country welcomed the appointment of a Special Coordinator to consult on a possible mandate for negotiations in the CD on the question of landmines. While congratulating Ambassador Campbell of Australia for the results achieved so far, we fully support the view that he needs more time to accomplish his mandate. It appears therefore necessary that the Conference request Ambassador Campbell to continue consulting delegations during the inter-sessional period and present a report by the beginning of the 1998 session.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Thank you, Mr. President. My delegation did not intend to take the floor at this meeting. Therefore, I shall save my congratulations to you for a future meeting. My delegation requested the floor in order to comment on the request by one of the Special Coordinators. However, it seems that His Excellency the Ambassador of Nigeria, the Coordinator of the Group of 21, has asked for the floor in order to present the position of the Group on this issue. Therefore I would prefer to let His Excellency the Ambassador of Nigeria speak.

Mr. HAYASHI (Japan): Mr. President, let me join previous speakers in congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency. My delegation has listened to the reports delivered by the four Special Coordinators with enthusiasm and admiration. All of them are very well thought out and certainly give hope to our shared sentiment that the CD should start substantive work.

Our delegation shares every point mentioned in the statement by the Chilean Ambassador, and thanks both Chile and Poland for their contribution in this respect. As has been stated and announced in Tokyo, my Government is going to Oslo as a full participant, and this is in order to support the noble endeavours of the Ottawa Process. We also share the view that the CD can make a significant contribution to reaching the goals of the United Nations on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. Concerning the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, considering the circumstances in which the Special Coordinator had to work, my delegation supports Chile and Poland and sincerely hopes that the CD will decide to allow him to continue his consultations during the inter-sessional period and to present a report at the first part of the 1998 session of the CD.

Mr. BOUCHAARA (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, my delegation would in its turn like to extend its sincere congratulations to you on taking over the presidency of this Conference. It would also like to thank the four Special Coordinators for the considerable amount of work which they have accomplished. I would like to make a brief comment on the report of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel mines. The delegation of Morocco takes note of the recommendations made by Ambassador Campbell of Australia, but is somewhat surprised at the tone of these recommendations. It would like to reiterate that no decision on the extension of a special coordinator's mandate

(Mr. Bouchaara, Morocco)

can be taken before consultations have been carried out and consent secured from capitals. I hope that I have been sufficiently clear on this score and that I have been understood.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I wish to make two observations, one relating to the reports of the Special Coordinators and one relating to the statement by Chile and Poland. First of all, I should like to thank the Special Coordinators for their thoughtful and thought-provoking reports. Although, rightly, each was issued upon the author's own authority, I found them, returning as I am to the Conference after an absence of some years, a valuable introduction to the current state of thinking within the Conference on the areas we cover. I believe they bring out those areas where there is some prospect of reaching a measure of agreement and those areas where positions may be somewhat further apart. I think it is clear from the reports that the work of the Special Coordinators is not yet at an end. This does not, I suggest, reflect on their personal abilities, rather on the limited time available to them to carry out their work. Ambassador Seibert of Germany spoke of the Special Coordinators being permitted to continue work in the inter-sessional period. I would venture to go perhaps a little further and suggest that the Special Coordinators might actively be encouraged to do so.

I might come now to the statement made in the name of Chile and Poland. I wish to say that my Government wishes to associate itself with the sentiments expressed in that statement. My Government is fully committed to the Ottawa Process. I hope next week to have the honour of leading our delegation to the conference in Oslo, but I hope in due course, assuming a successful outcome for the Ottawa Process, to return to the Conference to take up the subject within the framework of the CD, and specifically, with reference to the statement by Chile and Poland, I would wish to support the request of Ambassador Campbell that he should continue his consultations during the inter-sessional period and to present us with a final report at the start of the 1998 session.

Mr. DACHO (Slovakia): Mr. President, may I congratulate you on the assumption of your responsible function and assure you of my delegation's full support? We are sure that with your vast experience and diplomatic skills you will steer this body to a successful conclusion of its annual session. Allow me to thank the previous speakers for their kind words addressed to Ambassador Krasnohorská. I should also like to express my delegation's deep gratitude to the Special Coordinators, whose diligent work has enabled us today to profit from their respective reports. I should like to emphasize our deep appreciation for their great effort. We shall study their reports with due attention. Among many interesting facts and conclusions, all the Special Coordinators have mentioned that the time span provided for their work had been very limited and directly or indirectly stated the need for further consultations. They also recommended that the CD continue consultations during the inter-sessional period or during the next annual session. I did not intend to speak today, but this brings me to the other part of my short intervention.

(Mr. Dacho, Slovakia)

Slovakia continues to support actively all initiatives aimed at the achievement of a ban on anti-personnel landmines. At this point, I should like to mention that Slovakia is a full participant in the Ottawa Process. The Slovak authorities consider the CD and the Ottawa Process complementary. The delegation to the CD has therefore been instructed to support all activities in this direction. We share the view that present activities should be aimed at creating the conditions for an immediate opening of negotiations on anti-personnel landmines at the 1998 CD session. We also believe that unlike the Ottawa Process, the CD can take into consideration different security aspects and make, in this way, a significant contribution to the ultimate goal of the elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The ultimate objective of the negotiations in the CD should be to produce a typical disarmament treaty through a gradual process, if necessary. At the same time, we should unequivocally state that the Ottawa Process and the CD negotiations have the potential of being mutually supportive and reinforcing.

This brings me to the conclusion of my brief intervention, but I should like to add the voice of the Slovak delegation to the previous speakers who spoke in favour of the extension of the mandate of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, the distinguished Ambassador John Campbell of Australia, with a view to enabling him to continue consultations in order to complete his task and submit to the CD a report during the first part of the 1998 session. In other words, I should also like to associate Slovakia with the joint statement by Chile and Poland. We would be equally ready to consider and support the extension of the other Special Coordinators' mandates at an appropriate time.

Mr. ANDREEV (Bulgaria): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to offer you the congratulations of my delegation upon the assumption of your important duties. We would also like to thank Ambassador Krasnohorská, who preceded you in the Chair.

I shall be very brief today. We did not intend to take the floor. We have listened with great interest and attention to the reports which have been presented by the Special Coordinators here, and we would like to thank them for the very deep and detailed work that has been done. My Government would like to associate itself with the statement presented by the distinguished Ambassador of Chile on behalf of his country and Poland. It has been a long-standing position of Bulgaria that the CD provides the most appropriate expertise to elaborate multilateral instruments in the very important field of disarmament. At the same time, my country is fully committed to the Ottawa Process, to the spirit and goals of the Ottawa Process, and we feel that the Ottawa Process and the CD are two forums which complement each other rather than compete. Consequently, we support the request to prolong the mandate of Ambassador Campbell in order to allow him to present the final report on the anti-personnel landmines issue at the beginning of next year's session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. ABUAH (Nigeria): I should like to join the previous speakers in extending our gratitude to the Special Coordinators for the reports they have just rendered on the assignment given to them by the Conference. Obviously,

(Mr. Abuah, Nigeria)

one needs to recall that the decision of the Conference to appoint the Special Coordinators was taken on 26 June. It was barely two months ago. Is it not astonishing that the Special Coordinators themselves have been able to produce the kind of synthesis of ideas which we have had this morning? They need our support, but it seems to me that we are barred, at this stage, by the rules of procedure. A mandate of the Special Coordinators is set within the framework of the 1997 Conference session. Now, as indeed Ambassador John Campbell said a moment ago when he made his statement, because of lack of time - and this is obvious and is very clear - he would want to have more time to complete his work. We in the Group of 21 feel that the matter should be considered in the context of the 1998 work of the Conference on Disarmament. In the course of the adoption of the agenda and programme of work of the Conference in 1998, we have heard discussions and comments made about possible consultations inter-sessionally in 1997. The CD is of course capable of taking a decision in this regard, but we feel that if the mandate lapses with the end of the 1997 session, it would be extremely difficult for the Special Coordinators to conduct inter-sessional consultations. At any rate, the Group of 21 would like to ask for a deferment of a decision on this matter to allow for more consultations. The coordinators of the other groups are very clear in their own minds about the position of the Group of 21 on this very question. This matter has been discussed on several occasions at the Presidential consultations. So there is no element of surprise at the point that was just made about the position of the Group of 21. So I do hope that the Conference will bear with us.

Mr. ZHU (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation did not originally intend to speak but, having heard many speakers, it wishes to make a few points.

As regards the work of the four Special Coordinators, we think there are some points on which everyone agrees. First, the Coordinators have all worked conscientiously and done a great deal, though three of them have operated differently from the fourth, conducting open-ended consultations while the remaining one has conducted bilateral consultations. The second point of agreement is that none of the four has completed his job. As regards the jobs themselves, the Coordinators all believe that the work must continue. Then there is another point - though a minor one - namely that all four Coordinators were appointed at the same time. From the logical point of view, given that their jobs are not completed, they must of course continue with their work. From the logical point of view again, since the Coordinators were all appointed at the same time and they have difficult jobs to do, no one has disagreed with what they have been doing, and we have no reason to change any of them. I am talking from the logical point of view. But the question is, when should these four Coordinators continue with their work? During the inter-sessional period, or when the next session begins? This is not a new question: it has cropped up many times before. I think it is a question that must be resolved on the basis of the actual situation. When this session ends, the Conference will naturally not have anything to do. But everyone knows that work on biological weapons will resume right away, and then there is the General Assembly. By then, in the circumstances, I am afraid, not everybody will be here. So working effectively during the inter-sessional period will, I fear, be hard. A second question is, should the subsequent

(Mr. Sha, China)

work of the four Special Coordinators be considered in conjunction with the agenda and programme of work for the next session of the Conference? They would seem to be related. The Chinese delegation believes the whole situation must be taken into account. Now, within this framework, I should like to say a word or two about anti-personnel landmines.

There appear to be three forums for discussing the APL issue. One is the "Ottawa Process"; the second, for the sake of argument, we can call the "CD process". The third is the "Certain Conventional Weapons process". I fear that the Ottawa and CD processes differ in their very nature. Are they mutually supportive, mutually complementary? It is hard to say. Of course we hope so, or we used to - but now it is hard to say. Of course, one thing we can say is that they affect each other. Everyone remembers that towards the end of the second part of the session, many States said the Conference must get down to work - meaning that it should swiftly appoint a special coordinator for anti-personnel mines and draw up a mandate for him. That gave people the impression that the discussions on the mandate would be concluded in the third part of the session so that negotiations could start by the first part of next year's CD session. The Chinese delegation's position on APLs is crystal clear. I explained it thoroughly at our June session. We stated then that, out of respect for many States' wishes and to demonstrate our flexibility, we would agree to appoint a coordinator and commence work. As everyone will also recall, a month or so later - at the start of the third part of the session - some of the same countries said there was no need for precipitate action to deal with the question of APLs: the Conference should await the completion of the Ottawa Process. I am not quoting word for word, but many countries said something of the sort. During the second part of the session those countries had been propelling the work of CD forward very positively. The Chinese delegation regards this as an important change. What does it mean? Has something happened over the past month or so? Frankly, honestly, we do not understand. But given this change, the Chinese delegation will have to consider and review whether, next year, the Special Coordinator should or should not continue work on the question of APLs.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): First of all, Mr. President, it is my pleasant duty to convey the warm felicitations and sense of satisfaction of the Pakistan delegation at seeing you assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. This office comes to representatives to the CD in accordance with the turn of the wheel of fortune. It seems that this month the wheel of fortune has moved faster than normal. That is not unconnected with the discussions that we are having here this morning. But in any case, it is a befitting culmination of an outstanding tour of duty which you have had in Geneva, and I and many of your colleagues wish to acknowledge and pay you great tribute for these accomplishments. It is also my duty to express our satisfaction at the successful and eventful presidency of your predecessor, Ambassador Krasnohorská. She was able to achieve what has escaped the fingers of several of her predecessors. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, Ambassador Illanes of Chile, Ambassador Pearson of New Zealand and Ambassador Soutar of the United Kingdom.

We have heard the reports of the four Special Coordinators this morning, and my delegation will study those comments very carefully, but at this stage,

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

I would like to offer some brief comments on some of these reports. Firstly, we believe that Ambassador Zahran's report on improved and effective functioning is a thoughtful paper, which reflects the rich discussion that was held on this issue, and we would like to commend him in particular for the open and transparent manner in which those consultations were held. It must be noted, however, and we hope that our report to the General Assembly will note, that the working methods of the Conference are not the problem. But we can continue to work to improve our effectiveness.

As regards expansion, we agreed that there is no consensus yet, but perhaps our report should reaffirm that the observer States in the Conference on Disarmament have never had any difficulties in participating as fully as they wish in the work of the Conference, and I believe that those of them who remain interested in the work of the Conference will continue to participate actively in this work.

On the agenda and work programme, Ambassador Náray's report, we believe, reflects much of the ground which was covered by his predecessor, and we continue to hold to the view that the only consensus that exists on the international priorities for disarmament are reflected in the Final Document of the first special session.

Turning to the question of anti-personnel landmines, one is hesitant to make subs'antive comments on what has become a sort of a shell game: today here, tomorrow elsewhere. My delegation was the first to propose the establishment of the Special Coordinator on 30 January 1997, and I would like to say that we were happy when the Special Coordinator was finally appointed with the active support of many interested and relevant delegations. But it is difficult to follow a process where one does not know what the object is. I would say to those who wish to negotiate in the CD, which we believe is the relevant forum, that they must make up their minds whether they wish to run with the hares or hunt with the hounds. We believe the CD is the relevant forum, but the effort to open negotiations in the CD must be pursued with the seriousness that it deserves, not with vacillation and confusion. Ambassador Campbell has in his statement stated his impressions. I would note that he has consulted over 55 delegations of the 61 members of this Conference. Unfortunately, he did not get around to the delegation of Pakistan. Perhaps this was because there is the impression that we do not possess anti-personnel landmines, or perhaps because it is felt that there is no interest on the part of the Pakistan delegation on this issue, or perhaps it is felt that we have no views on this matter. Hopefully, we will be able to correct these misapprehensions at a subsequent stage.

With regard to the proposal to extend the mandate of one or more of the Special Coordinators, I would like to reiterate that our rules of procedure envisage the termination of the officers of this Conference, except for the office of the presidency. The presidency of this Conference is the continuity between one session and the next. Therefore, while we agree that further work is required, we must find a modality to conduct such further work, whether on APLs or on other issues, through the modalities that are provided in the rules of procedure. We note of course that Ambassador Campbell himself has stated in his report that delegations "would prefer to decide on a

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

specific mandate [on APLs] in early 1998", and therefore the proposal for inter-sessional consultations does not possess the same urgency as would be the case if, for example, we would all determine to open negotiations in the CD and not await other events.

My delegation would like to suggest that you, Sir, as President of the Conference, should be entrusted with the authority to call for informal consultations on the issue of APLs and on any other issue that you consider relevant in the period from the end of our current session to the beginning of our 1998 session, or to the end of the year, when your presidency will end. This would allow us to get together, if circumstances arise which create the possibility for genuine negotiations on APLs in the CD. It is under those circumstances that my delegation would be very happy to join in such consultations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and for his kind words to me. We have five more requests for the floor, from the delegations of Venezuela, the United States of America, Argentina, Spain and Syria. I believe this list is correct, and I would now like to give the floor to the delegation of Venezuela.

Mr. CORRALES REAL (Venezuela) (translated from Spanish): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as President for this session. I am not going to make a general statement but will confine myself to a comment on the subject of anti-personnel landmines, the report on the consultations which was introduced by Ambassador Campbell of Australia, whom we congratulate, along with the other Coordinators, for the work they have accomplished and the reports presented here today on the different subjects. My delegation shares the view of a large number of delegations that the Conference should consider the subject of anti-personnel landmines and of course include it on its agenda for future work. Naturally, in our view, the mandate of the Conference should be the subject of consultations and bilateral contacts, especially, and we agree with a sizeable group of delegations, under the coordination of Ambassador Campbell, the extension of whose mandate we support at this point in time. My delegation considers that progress in the proceedings of the Oslo Conference, which my country will attend, and the adoption of an instrument on this subject is going to have major repercussions on the mandate that the Conference on Disarmament might decide to have in relation to the handling of this subject in the future. We think that the Ottawa Process and the mandate of the Conference on this subject, although different arrangements because of their very nature, should be considered as complementary and compatible and in no way mutually exclusive or contradictory. My delegation, in concluding this brief declaration, wishes to express its support in general terms for the document introduced by the Ambassador of Chile on behalf of his country and Poland.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): As with others, it had not been the intention of my delegation to seek the floor this morning, but the discussion has been interesting, and I think we would like to make a few remarks.

(Ms. Crittenberger, United States)

On the first point, we would like to take note of the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile on behalf of Chile and Poland, and to note that this is fully consistent with those views on APLs held by my Government. Indeed, I spoke to this issue last week in plenary and I will not go into detail on those comments now I would, however, like to recall the United States support for negotiations on a global APL ban in the CD, and in that context, to note that the rationale behind that support includes the fact that many major historical APL producers and exporters have said that they will not participate in the Oslo negotiations, nor sign any treaty that results. Consequently, we are dedicated to continue our efforts to work toward a global ban in the CD on a step-by-step basis, even after the Ottawa treaty has been completed, and in that context, we have welcomed comments made over the last several months by some of those countries that will not participate in the Oslo meeting on their willingness to look into this issue in the Conference on Disarmament.

On the subject of the work of the Special Coordinators, I would like to join my voice with those of others in thanking them for their reports and for the energetic manner in which they tackled their tasks. The reports, of course, are on their own cognizance, but they offer us much valuable food for thought. As has already been noted, there is a common feature in all four reports - that there was not enough time to do enough work to enable the Coordinators to present consensus reports or definitive conclusions. Each Coordinator noted that further efforts would be required to reach that point. It has been rightly pointed out that new decisions will be required regarding any continuation of this work. Indeed, I presume that is why the Coordinators either recommended that their work continue or sought an extension of their mandates, because of their assumption that we would indeed have to take a new decision. It was not a presumption that they could continue their work without such a request.

At the same time, I wish to point out that our rules of procedure do not specifically address the question of appointments of special coordinators. This is an informal arrangement. The CD can make any working arrangements it desires, on a consensus basis. We assume, of course, that no one would wish to prevent the continuation of this valuable work, which will contribute to helping the CD make progress where it can. My delegation adds its voice to those of others that have proposed that we, the CD, decide before our session concludes how to continue this work. In our annual report to the United Nations General Assembly we could reflect those decisions, at least those we can reach at this point, on how to carry on such work. As an example, the Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning has recommended that efforts be continued in 1998. The CD could positively reflect this recommendation in the report, as indeed has been done in past reports. I believe in 1994, for example, it was agreed in the CD to reflect in the report the extension of the work of the then Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning for the following year. As for the work of the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, it seems to my delegation that this is relevant to tne consideration of the substantive work that the CD might undertake next year. Consequently, it is our view that the CD should decide to ask the Coordinator to continue his consultations on a possible mandate and report back to us at the outset of the 1998 session so it can be

(Ms. Crittenberger, United States)

factored into our decision-making on the substantive work the CD would undertake. I recall again that there are precedents for this kind of decision-making. Indeed, I believe in 1994 the then Canadian Ambassador Shannon, as Special Coordinator on fissile material cut-off, was asked to continue his consultations into the following year and report back, and there are other examples of this, so it would not be unprecedented for us to take a forward-looking view on what it is that we might want to do next year.

As a final remark, let me support the motion raised by the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan that you and the next CD President should undertake efforts to consult on how we might get a jump-start to the 1998 session.

Mr. BENITEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): In view of the time, I will be very brief. My delegation first of all wishes to thank the four Special Coordinators for the excellent reports that they have presented to us. As we are, in a sense, focusing on a specific debate, and time is pressing, I will go directly to the point we are discussing in one way or another, and that is to express our interest in participating in, and our commitment to the success of, the Ottawa Process, which all the delegations here understand. This, however, does not cause us to lose sight of the fact that we have always maintained that the CD has a complementary role that should be coherent and mutually supportive with the agreements we hope to reach in Oslo. Of course, this is not an isolated position on our part, but one shared with a large majority of delegations, many of them, which have spoken in the course of this morning. This is why we attach special importance to the possibility of keeping up the momentum that this subject currently enjoys after the Oslo meeting, and in that regard we view as very useful and positive the suggestion made by our Special Coordinator, Ambassador Campbell, supported of course by the statements of several delegations that have spoken during the course of this morning, to the effect that his mandate should be extended over the inter-sessional period. Certainly this also ties in with our own opinion concerning the role of special coordinators: it is our understanding that it is not in any way their task to prejudge or shape decisions, but simply to prepare the ground for the consensus which has eluded us this year, and certainly this year consensus has run faster than our will has and we have caught up with it only on rare occasions, and one of them was the very moment when we appointed those Special Coordinators.

My delegation considers that the considerations set forth by the Group of 21 in the shape of its spokesman, the Ambassador of Nigeria, are very important, and we think that the rules of procedure should be respected, but we also think that they are not sacrosanct - the rules of procedure are at the service of the work of the Conference. In that regard, we listened very carefully to the need not to prejudge the 1998 agenda, and we do not think that carrying out preparatory work to enable us to take a better decision would necessarily mean that we were prejudging such a decision. The Special Coordinators will be able to continue their work during the inter-sessional period. I can assure you that every one of our delegations will take whatever decision it deems fit at the beginning of the next session in a totally independent spirit, undoubtedly better enlightened by work which is willingly being made available to the Conference and which we should not underestimate. We also take into consideration the need to allow for consultation with

(Mr. Benítez, Argentina)

capitals, not least for this decision which we are, in a way, putting before ourselves now, to extend the mandates, and in this regard it seems to us very important that this matter should remain on the agenda for the few meetings that we still have left till the end of the year.

The Ambassador of Pakistan made a very important statement. The first thing that emerges in our view is that in the inter-sessional period Ambassador Campbell should consult the delegation of Pakistan, which of course always has a very clear view and makes a contribution which is by no means negligible. I believe that is an additional reason why Ambassador Campbell should not stop working during the inter-sessional period. As for the possibility that you, Mr. President, should take charge of the informal consultations, that would certainly be a source of great pleasure to us, but I think that it would give you extra work which possibly in the course of the coming year should normally be undertaken by the Special Coordinator. It would also be more efficient for you to make use of this possibility of continuing to apply to Ambassador Campbell during the inter-sessional period the mandate which was conferred on him.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Argentina. We still have four more requests for the floor, from Spain, Syria, France and Australia, and with your consent, given the time - it is almost 15 minutes to 1 o'clock - I would like to close the list of speakers with these four names, if that is acceptable. The representative of Pakistan has the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): With all due respect, I do not think that we have a rule of procedure which allows the closure of the list of speakers. We do not know what will be said, and if it is necessary to come into the discussion, we will have to come in. So, with all due respect, I hope the statements will be brief and that it will not be necessary for additional statements to be made.

The PRESIDENT: We shall continue with the representative of Spain, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. MARTINEZ MORCILLO (Spain) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I shall try to heed your request and your hope that the next few statements will be as brief as possible, with an exception to that request, and that exception is to enable me to convey to you my very sincere congratulations on taking the Chair, and to wish you with the greatest sincerity every success in carrying out this task. I would also be remiss if I were not to note on this occasion the effective and skilful work performed by your predecessor, the Ambassador of Slovakia.

I wish to refer to two specific circumstances, and to try to outline a series of political consequences from my standpoint. The first circumstance I wish to refer to is the remarkable presentations that we have heard this morning from the four Special Coordinators on the specific subjects they have been dealing with. I followed their statements very carefully and I cannot fail to convey my very sincere congratulations to them for the content of each of the reports, with different styles, certainly, but I think that they all reflect the positions set out in the various discussions, and of course my

(Mr. Martínez Morcillo, Spain)

delegation can identify, in each of these reports, those points to which it had access when it participated in the open-ended consultations, both general and regional. However, without entering into further detail for the moment concerning the value of these four reports, which I underline, I would like to refer to two facts that arise out of their presentation.

The first is that these four reports come from representatives of three of the regional groups in this Conference on Disarmament. In that variety in the origin of the reports, and without in the slightest affecting their impartial and neutral character, I think I can perceive an expression of the attempt to unite positions and the attempt to arrive at a convergence of positions among the various delegations that are present in this Conference. The fact that these Special Coordinators are representing a broad range of the political positions that exist in this Conference should not be overlooked. There is an incontestable fact, a clear consequence, in the presentation of the four reports, which is that the four Special Coordinators have said for various reasons, on various grounds, that they have not had time to present and make progress in their conclusions. This political representativeness, combined with the proven impartiality of the designated Special Coordinators, would require this Conference to take a further step to keep them in their posts and thereby ensure that in due course they would be able to submit reports that will facilitate progress in the work of this Conference.

The other point to which I also wish to refer, and from which I would also like to draw political consequences, is the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile on behalf of his delegation and on behalf of the delegation of Poland. For me it is significant that this statement - and I would like to say straight away that I endorse it and associated myself with it - has been presented by a representative of the Group of 21 and therefore has been presented on behalf of a delegation in the Group of 21 and also on behalf of a delegation from the Eastern European Group, and therefore this statement also to some extent reflects an attempt to make headway in bringing together the different positions that exist in the Conference. Consequently, I too would like to underline this important characteristic which can be inferred from the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile. At the same time I would not like to miss this opportunity to say once again that my delegation associates itself with the points contained in it for two reasons. First, because there is no doubt that one of the topics that is currently a focus of world attention is the topic of mines. There is no doubt that this is one of the issues that is currently enjoying the most coverage by the mass media, but there is equally no doubt, or at least this is the view of my delegation, that the laudable objectives pursued under the "Ottawa Process" cannot be attained unless they have a counterpart that takes account of the important aspect which is also involved in the mines issue, which is the aspect, or the consequences of this in the sphere of disarmament and its impact on the national security interests and concerns of countries. Therefore my delegation fully endorses the statement made by the Ambassador of Chile, and equally, reiterating my support and my hope that this Conference will be able to renew the mandates of the four Special Coordinators, I attach special importance to the renewal of the appointment of the Ambassador of Australia because of the special characteristics attached to his case.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, I shall try to be brief in spite of the fact that the subjects tabled for discussion are very important. First of all, on behalf of my country's delegation, I would like to thank the four Special Coordinators for the statements they made today. We will certainly study these statements and, if necessary, comment thereon in due course. For the moment, I would like to comment on the report of the Special Coordinator, His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia.

Firstly, we believe that His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia was probably more fortunate than the other four Special Coordinators because he had a specific and clear-cut mandate. However, the statement he made today gave my delegation the impression that the Special Coordinator had exceeded this mandate. The Ambassador of Australia said in his statement that he saw his role as being

(continued in English)

"to identify both the common ground and those issues on which opinions differ, and then to attempt to come up with a proposal ...".

(continued in Arabic)

The mandate of the Special Coordinator which was specified in document CD/1466 does not give him the authority to present any proposals. The first paragraph of his mandate stipulates that his mandate is

(continued in English)

"to conduct consultations on a possible mandate on the question of anti-personnel landmines".

(continued in Arabic)

Therefore this mandate includes carrying out consultations only and presenting a report on these consultations.

Secondly, His Excellency the Ambassador of Australia has asked the Conference to extend his mandate once again so that he can present a final report. However, the third paragraph of his mandate stipulates that the Special Coordinator has to present a report as soon as possible -

(continued in English)

"an early report" -

(continued in Arabic)

and I believe that the beginning of the 1998 session cannot be described as early. Our position in the Group of 21 - and here I would like to remind the Ambassador of Spain of the fact that the Coordinator of the Group of 21 is Nigeria and not any other country, and any other country that spoke at this

(Mr. Orfi, Syrian Arab Republic)

meeting spoke only in its national capacity - was announced yesterday during the Presidential consultations and was reaffirmed today by the Coordinator of the Group of 21; namely that the Group of 21 is of the opinion that the mandates of the Special Coordinators will end on the conclusion of this year's session, that is to say on 10 September.

Now, as regards the proposal made by His Excellency the Ambassador of Pakistan, we can support such a proposal provided that the President is mandated to conduct consultations on the programme of work for the 1998 session and not specifically on landmines, because we do not understand why landmines should be accorded a special status and highlighted. The problem this year has not been landmines; it has been the fact that no agreement has been reached on an integrated programme of work. Therefore, if the mandate assigned to the President is to conduct consultations on a programme of work for the 1998 session, we can support this proposal.

Mr. PIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to extend to you and the four Special Coordinators all the thanks and congratulations of the French delegation. We shall of course study these four reports with the greatest attention.

Permit me briefly to note, in connection with the report submitted by Ambassador Zahran, that my delegation is particularly pleased that he has been able to find so many areas of convergence, and that we consider that this report should guide our work next year, because it contains many useful suggestions.

Turning to the report presented by Ambassador Kreid, we admire the subtlety with which he has been able to present points for consideration on a difficult subject, and I would venture to say that, for those who know how subtle his approach is, it is clear that he has discreetly indicated a possible way out of the difficulties he faced. We will find inspiration in his report for what we have to do on this issue next year.

Ambassador Náray's report is certainly the most substantive one, and maybe, given this year's deadlock, the one on which our consultations ought to continue in the greatest depth. France hopes that the General Assembly of the United Nations will also give us some ideas on how to emerge from this deadlock.

Finally, with regard to Ambassador Campbell's report, my delegation has taken note of the comments made by many delegations on this subject. I simply wish to express our support to Ambassador Campbell, in the same way as to his three colleagues. It is the duty of all delegations to give them support because they are working for all of us, and the authority of the Special Coordinators reflects that of the Conference itself. The task which Ambassador Campbell has to carry out, which is to lead us towards a possible negotiating mandate on anti-personnel mines in this Conference under item 6 of our agenda, is an especially difficult mandate. We regret that, as his first two reports attest, a consensus has not yet taken shape on such a mandate.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

France has always been in the forefront of the fight against anti-personnel mines, and the measures we have taken at the national level show how serious our commitment is, leading us to renounce mines completely by the end of 1999 at the latest. It was in this context that my country decided to join the Ottawa Process, whose main provisions it is indeed already implementing at the national level. But on the eve of the opening of the Oslo conference, we have a twofold concern: we would like as many countries as possible to join us in working towards a total ban, and in particular the countries which produce or use anti-personnel mines on a large scale today. If they are not present, the efforts of the international community to reach the goal set by United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S would be doomed to remain incomplete. In that spirit, we hope that the legitimate attention given to the Ottawa Process today will not conceal the scale of the task which will remain to be accomplished next year in the Conference on Disarmament. It is there that the dialogue was initiated to prepare for negotiations based on the principle of consensus; it is there that the challenge of a universal ban on anti-personnel mines needs to be taken up. My country hopes that the entire international community will recognize the reality of what has happened over the last nine months: the Ottawa Process, the work in the Conference on Disarmament and the progressive implementation of Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects are not only complementary but are mutually reinforcing. As at least one delegation has emphasized this morning, a development here leads to repercussions elsewhere. It is in that spirit that my delegation would like to reiterate its support for Ambassador Campbell, to emphasize the priority attached to the speedy conclusion of his work. It is also in that spirit that France approves of the inspiration behind what was said by the Ambassador of Chile, as well as the idea of extending the mandate of the four Special Coordinators during the inter-sessional period. The French delegation notes that three delegations have requested time to think; this must be respected. We hope that a reply can be provided before we complete our work. It is in that spirit, finally, that we support the proposal made by the Ambassador of Pakistan in the terms in which he couched it.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France. I have two more speakers on my list, and since we have to resume our session in the afternoon in an informal plenary meeting to consider the draft annual report, we should try to finish our meeting, if possible, within the next five minutes. I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): I am sure I spoke for my fellow Coordinators in thanking delegations for the kind words that they have used to describe the way in which we have each of us carried out our responsibilities. I must say the support and encouragement we have received is appreciated.

In response to the comments made by our distinguished colleague from Pakistan, I would like to say that the order in which I saw delegations had much more to do with their availability during the holiday months of July and August than the weight I placed on their likely contributions to my consultations. That said, I might remind him that we did have a preliminary

(Mr. Campbell, Australia)

discussion on APLs when he called on me several weeks ago to press the claims of a Pakistani national as a candidate for a high position with a certain specialized agency. However, I would like to say that it is an acknowledgement of Ambassador Akram's long experience in this body and the value that I place on his opinions and judgements that I have in a sense saved him for one of the last of my interlocutors in order more fully to discuss with him the range of opinions that I have encountered and to seek his guidance on the way he thinks I ought to proceed. As my mandate has not yet expired, I look forward to being able to do so in the near future.

With regard to the comments made by the representative of Syria, if Special Coordinators were to carry out their tasks on the terms that he described, we would not need Special Coordinators at all. We could have questionnaires or a show of hands in the plenary. My view and understanding is that Special Coordinators are appointed to try and find a constructive way out of impasses that we find ourselves in in this body. I must say that as long as I remain Special Coordinator, that is the approach that will guide my responsibilities.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): This is purely a procedural question. It has nothing to do with landmines, so everybody in the room can start breathing again. The point I would like to make is that we had rashly, as Canada, convened another meeting at 3 o'clock this afternoon. I just wanted to take a second of your time, and I apologize for that, to ask those delegations which are members of the expanded Western Group on United Nations topics to remain behind quickly, briefly after this meeting so that we can sort ourselves out, given your intention to continue in the informal plenary this afternoon. So, expanded Western Group members, two minutes at the conclusion of your meeting, and I again apologize for taking up some of your time.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I am grateful to the distinguished Ambassador of Australia for having taken the trouble to respond to my comment. I would just like to say two things about this. Firstly, I am sure he will agree that the informal chat in which we spent a couple of minutes in passing on APLs did not constitute the consultations that he intended to hold with all delegations. Secondly, I was available throughout the months, with a very short period in Geneva for such consultations. Thirdly, the position of my delegation with respect to the question of special coordinators is not related to whether or not we were consulted. It is related to the fact that the situation has become totally murky as far as the negotiations on APLs are concerned, and I do not think I need to explain that much further. I already have perhaps said more than I should. But the situation is absolutely murky on APLs. We would like to see what happens. We will then decide how to proceed. If delegations are serious about negotiating on APLs within the Conference on Disarmament, we would like to see proof of that. We can then proceed to negotiate a mandate. Therefore, for the moment, at the present time, no consultations are required. We can all relax, do BW, do the General Assembly. Once we know what happens, then we will be in a position to consult and you, Mr. President, are in the best position, as the President of this Conference, to pick up the strings, look at the work programme, as our colleague from Syria said, and look at the issue of APLs and see where we can go next year. That is our approach, and we hope that there will be agreement on this.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you for your statement. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

We have heard the various shades of opinion with regard to the extensions of a new mandate or mandates of Special Coordinators. There were references or requests to extend the mandates. Some were of the opinion that we could do this next year. Some others thought that we should refer the matter to the capitals. There was a view that the President could hold consultations during the inter-sessional period. And finally, Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of 21, stated that a decision on this matter should be deferred to enable that particular group to hold consultations.

Taking into consideration the manner in which we take decisions in this forum, I believe we have to give ourselves a little bit of time for further consultations. Also, I have noted the point made by one delegation, at least, that we had worked inter-sessionally in the past, on one or two occasions, but in fact what we have to bear in mind here is whether there is consensus to entrust that kind of function to the Special Coordinator or Coordinators to undertake such work inter-sessionally, whether there is a consensus in this regard. Since we are going to meet informally this afternoon, perhaps we can give ourselves a little bit of time and think about it and come back with our own views.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to inform you that, in view of the late hour, the informal plenary meeting to start the consideration of the draft annual report, as contained in document CD/WP.489, will be held this afternoon at 3 p.m. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Thursday, 4 September 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.